

CONSULTATIVE MEETING WITH YOUNG MOTHERS IN UGANDA
HELD ON 30TH JUNE 2020
BY UNYPA

On 30th June 2020, UNYPA, with sponsorship from the Coalition for Children Affected by AIDS, conducted a consultation with young mothers in Uganda to find out what changes they would like to propose to a draft global advocacy agenda being developed by a group of international organisations. The consultation also sought to find out how COVID-19 was impacting on young mothers and their children.

This is the report from the consultation, written and facilitated by Ruth Awori, of UNYPA.

The organisers wish to thank the young mothers for taking part. All of them are champions for change in their own right in their communities, nationally and internationally, including Miriam Hasasha, young mother Ambassador to the Coalition for Children Affected by AIDS.

Qn: I What do you think of the agenda?

The young mothers acknowledged the efforts made in putting this document. They all agreed that the document served its purpose of speaking to the needs and key asks of young mothers in Uganda and beyond.

- ❖ The agenda speaks to many people in terms of messaging clearly stipulating what they should do to support the young mothers however we need to have a message for the young mothers for themselves. A couple of messages could be shared for young mothers for instance “Being a young mother is no reason to give up on personal dreams and goals”, “Your baby’s life is just like yours, Important”, “Criticism comes with young motherhood, use the available support networks for the positive vibes/energy”(do we have a proposed message)
- ❖ When setting up the asks to the different players, we need not to forget the school administrators, religious and cultural leaders as they are really key players on the direction of life of a young mother. For instance, some young mothers suffer consequences of religious and cultural beliefs such as considering teenage pregnancies an abomination and highly punishable.
- ❖ We need to emphasize the purpose of peer support for young mothers and attitude transformation.

Proposed asks to cultural and religious leaders.

- ❖ Desist from judging the young mothers as these are sometimes mothers as a result of an unforeseen circumstances such as defilement and instead promote a culture of openness and rehabilitation for teen mothers to live a healthy and productive life even after delivering.
- ❖ Embrace transformation even in the cultures and practices but rather find better means to support the young children as they grow. For instance, rather than insisting on abstinence, they should understand that the young people get sexually active as early as 11 or 12 years so in such a situation the best advice would be on how to have and negotiate safer sex.
- ❖ Use their platforms to preach peace and forgiveness but also speak against vices such as incest, defilement, rape which are many times the cause of teenage pregnancies.
- ❖ Religious leaders to come out as champions of ending violence against women and girls and condemn it from the religious point of view
- ❖ Cultural leaders to challenge the negative gender norms that expose girls and women to violence, as well as teenage pregnancies

Proposed asks to school administrators.

- ❖ There is need to operationalize the National Sexuality Education framework such that young people in schools can receive information on their sexuality and sexual health

- ❖ They should also work with Ministry of Education and sports by supporting the operationalization of the national sexuality education Framework
- ❖ They should provide a second chance for young mothers to continue school if they are willing to.
- ❖ The school administrators need to revise their bylaws to consider re- integration of girls into school after they give birth; providing an environment for the teen mothers to successfully go back to school

Qn2: What questions they wish to pose to PEPFAR / OGAC and the Global Fund with regard to adolescent mothers affected by HIV and their children?

- ❖ What is the plan for ensuring involvement of young mothers in programs meant for them at all levels?
- ❖ Thanks for ensuring that the budget is there to finance the work targeting young mothers. However, is there a tracking mechanism to ensure that the money serves its purpose?